

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 211200Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2461

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1203

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AG, SS, MR,

SUBJECT: SPANISH SAHARA: ALGERIAN POSITION

1. RECENT TELEGRAMS FROM RABAT REPORT CONTINUED MOROCCAN CONCERN REGARDING ALGERIAN POSITION ON SPANISH SAHARA PROBLEM. MOROCCANS OF COURSE HAVE THEIR OWN SOURCES AND IN BETTER POSITION THAN WE TO KNOW WHAT ALGERIANS DOING IN TERMS MILITARY MOVEMENTS, LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, ETC. FROM HERE, HOWEVER, THERE IS VERY LITTLE FIRM INFORMATION INDICATING WHAT, IF ANYTHING, ALGERIANS ARE UP TO.

2. AT DINNER GIVEN BY FONMIN BOUTEFLIKA FOR IRANIAN AND IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTERS MAY 19 I HAD OPPORTUNITY FOR FRANK CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR ARAB AFFAIRS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, ABDELKADER BENKACI. HE SAID ALGERIAN POLICY REMAINS THAT ALGERIA HAS ABSOLUTELY NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS BUT IS AN INTERESTED PARTY BY VIRTUE OF FACT IT SHARES BORDER WITH SAHARA, THAT TRIBAL POPULATIONS HAVE ALWAYS MOVED BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THAT FRONTIER AND THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE LIVING IN TINDOUF AREA WHO HAVE RELATIVES ACROSS BORDER. ALGERIA CANNOT SIMPLY

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STAND BY WITH FOLDED HANDS AND PAY NO ATTENTION TO WHAT

HAPPENS IN AREA BECAUSE IT WILL INEVITABLY BE AFFECTED. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT A STABLE AND PEACEFUL SOLUTION BE ATTAINED. ALGERIANS THOUGHT THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE UNLESS PEOPLE OF AREA WERE FIRST CONSULTED AS TO THEIR OWN WISHES. OTHERWISE, SITUATION IN WHICH CIVIL WAR WOULD ERUPT COULD EASILY BE CREATED.

3. I ASKED WHAT ALGERIAN POSITION WOULD BE IF MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA AGREED ON SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THEM. BENKACI SAID THIS MIGHT WORK, PROVIDED SOME ARRANGEMENT HAD BEEN MADE FOR CONSULTING WISHES OF POPULATION.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH MOROCCAN CHARGE I ASKED HIM WHAT INFORMATION THEY HAD REGARDING ALGERIAN MILITARY OR PARA-MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN AREA. HE SAID THERE WERE STRONG RUMORS POINTING TO RECENT REINFORCEMENT OF ALGERIAN TROOPS IN AREA AND THAT ALGERIANS WERE SUPPORTING TO UNDETERMINED EXTENT ACTIVITIES OF POPULAR FRONT FOR LIBERATION OF SAHARA, WHICH HEADQUARTERED IN TINDOUF. HE CONFESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY HAD VERY LITTLE HARD INFORMATION TO GO ON AND ASKED WHAT WE HAD. I SAID WE HAD ABSOLUTELY NONE AND THAT EVERYTHING WE HEARD LOCALLY SEEMED TO HAVE ORIGINATED WITH NON-ALGERIAN SOURCES, SUCH AS SPANISH OR MOROCCANS.

5. COMMENT: GIVEN ALGERIAN COMMITMENT TO DECOLONIZATION AND PAN-AFRICAN GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT ON RESPECT FOR BORDERS ESTABLISHED BY COLONIAL POWERS, BELIEVE IT INEVITABLE ALGERIANS WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR SAHARA. THE METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE WILL PRESUMABLY DETERMINE RESULT. ALGERIANS MAY WELL BELIEVE THAT BY STANDING BY AS "INTERESTED PARTY" AND VERABLY AGITATING QUESTION OCCASIONALLY AS BOUTEFELKA DID AT CAIRO, THEY CAN PREVENT UNILATERAL MOROCCAN TAKEOVER AND ALSO PERHAPS PRY ALGERIA-MOROCCAN BORDER RATIFICATION OUT OF RABAT.

6. ALGERIANS HAVE LARGELY KEPT ISSUE OUT OF LOCAL PRESS, HOWEVER, AND HAVE BEEN QUIET ABOUT IT. THEY
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CANNOT IGNORE WHAT IS GOING ON IN SAHARA, BUT WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THEY CONSIDERING ANY RASH STEPS SUCH AS MILITARY ACTION.PARKER

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